

Location: The 1982 Chinese census listed a population of 1,147 Numao people living in the mountains of southern China. They are located in Libo County in southern Guizhou Province.¹ The Chinese authorities later amended their Numao population to 1,391 after they included the 244 Beidongnuo people with the Numao.

Identity: The Numao, despite their small size, are known by a variety of different names. Local Han Chinese people call them *Heiku Yao*, which means “black trouser Yao,” after the Numao men’s custom of wearing black trousers. One subgroup of the Numao are called the *Beidongnuo*. The Chinese have found that this small group speak the same language as the Numao. But the Beidongnuo are profiled separately in *Operation China* because they insist they are a different ethnic group. The Numao are one of eleven distinct tribes of the Bunu people, all of which have been officially included under the Yao nationality by the Chinese authorities.

Language: The Numao speak a language that is different from all others in China. It is most closely related to the Baonuo language spoken by about 15,000 people in southern Guizhou and northern



Yao Update

Guangxi. Numao is part of the Bunuic branch of the Hmong (Miao) language family. Although the Numao and other Bunu groups speak a language related to Miao, they have been officially included under Yao because of cultural similarities.

History: Long before the start of the Christian era, it is generally believed, the numerous groups belonging to today’s Miao, Yao, and She nationalities were part of the same great race. Chinese accounts place the ancestors of these people in northern China around 500 BC. Persecution forced them to migrate into southern China, especially into the regions that are today’s Jiangxi and Hunan provinces. Further conflict forced these groups to splinter into dozens of smaller units who, after

centuries of separation from other members of their original race, evolved into distinct ethnolinguistic groups.

Customs: Numao culture is similar to that of the Yao who live in the same part of China. They consider Pan Hu to be their progenitor and worship him at certain festivals throughout the year. All Numao are agriculturists, struggling to produce good crops from the poor soil where they live.

Religion: In addition to their worship of Pan Hu, the Numao revere and appease a hierarchy of spirits and deities — including the spirit of the soil — and demons, which they believe live inside the highest mountains in their region.

Christianity: Because of their small size, groups like the Numao tend to be overlooked by the Christian world. There has never been a known follower of Christ from among their tribe. God’s Word has promised there will be redeemed representatives from all tribes, including the Numao, around his throne in heaven. Church planters need to view the Numao as an untouched group desperately in need of God, rather than ignore them because of their small numbers.



Population in China:

1,147 (1982)
1,745 (2000)
2,250 (2010)

Location: Guizhou

Religion: Polytheism

Christians: None Known

Overview of the Numao

Countries: China

Pronunciation: “Noo-maow”

Other Names: Nu-Mhou, Heiku Yao, Black Trouser Yao

Population Source:
1,147 (1982 census);
Out of a total Yao population of 2,134,013 (1990 census)

Location: S Guizhou: Libo County

Status:

Officially included under Yao

Language: Hmong-Mien, Hmongic, Bunuic, Naogelao

Dialects: 0

Religion: Polytheism, Animism, Ancestor Worship

Christians: None known

Scripture: None

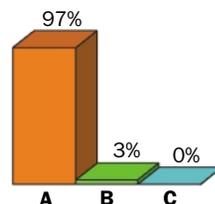
Jesus film: None

Gospel Recordings: None

Christian Broadcasting: None

ROPAL code: BWX05

Status of Evangelization



A = Have never heard the gospel
B = Were evangelized but did not become Christians
C = Are adherents to any form of Christianity